

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3847

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, RP

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A) STATE 45319, B) MANILA A-87 OF MARCH 14, 1975

FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF AIRGRAM ON HUMAN RIGHTS PREPARED
AS DIRECTED REFTEL A.

BEGIN SUMMARY

1. BASIC POLITICAL RIGHTS REMAIN CURTAILED UNDER THE
CURRENT MARTIAL LAW REGIME IN THE PHILIPPINES. THE
HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY STATIC
SINCE THE PREPARATION OF REFAIR B IN MARCH 1975. THERE
HAVE BEEN NO EGREGIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OF THE
TYPE WHICH MARKED THE INITIAL PHASES OF MARTIAL LAW.
WHILE THE GOP EVIDENCES INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE POPULACE
REMAINS GENERALLY INDIFFERENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
WHICH AFFECT ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THEIR NUMBER.

2. THE GOP CONTINUES TO DETAIN THREE MAJOR POLITICAL
FIGURES AND AT LEAST ONE CLERIC WHOSE CASES HAVE
ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD ATTENTION IN THE U.S. IN
THE PAST YEAR THE NUMBER OF HARDCORE "POLITICAL
DETAINEES" HAS PROBABLY DECLINED. THERE WAS A
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WAVE OF ARRESTS IN JANUARY 1976, BUT MOST OF THOSE

PICKED UP (STUDENTS, SQUATTER LEADERS, AND MEMBERS OF A DISSIDENT LABOR GROUP) WERE RELEASED QUICKLY. PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS ORDERED AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, HIS PRINCIPAL MARTIAL LAW INSTRUMENTALITY. DESPITE APPARENT HIGH LEVEL GOP CONCERN ABOUT AFP MISCONDUCT, MALTREATMENT AND OCCASIONALLY TORTURE SOMETIMES MARK AT LEAST THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE DETENTION PROCESS, ESPECIALLY WHERE COMMUNIST DISSIDENTS ARE CONCERNED. WHEN MALTREATMENT AND TORTURE OCCUR, IT APPEARS GENERALLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OVERZEALOUS ELEMENTS AT THE WORKING LEVEL AND IS NOT NECESSARILY REFLECTIVE OF CONSCIOUS GOVERNMENT POLICY.

3. THE LEGAL OPPOSITION HAS BECOME WEAKER AND LESS UNITED DURING THE PAST YEAR, ALTHOUGH IT PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED TWO MAJOR ATTACKS AGAINST THE REGIME ON THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF MARTIAL LAW. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS SCANDALS SIMILAR TO THE HILAO OR ARCE/ALVARCAZ CASES OF 1974. THE MEDIA REMAIN CONTROLLED ALTHOUGH THE PRESS IS NOW SOMEWHAT MORE LIVELY AND SPONTANEOUS. THE EMBASSY CONTINUES TO ADVISE GOP OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS KEY PERSONNEL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OF THE PROBLEMS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CAUSE THE PHILIPPINES IN THE U.S. THERE ARE SIGNS THE GOP HAS BECOME MORE SENSITIVE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND IS ADJUSTING ITS CONDUCT ACCORDINGLY AS IT APPRECIATES THE EFFECT SUCH VIOLATIONS MIGHT HAVE ON U.S. ASSISTANCE LEVELS. IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THE REGIME'S EFFORTS TO COMPILE A RESPECTABLE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WILL EVER BE MORE IMPORTANT TO IT THAN REMAINING FIRMLY IN COMMAND OF NATION EVEN SHOULD THIS REQUIRE MORE SEVERE MEASURES.
END SUMMARY
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